



DEVOTIONAL TIME

07-08-2015 @ 0900

"With What Will You Build a Life?"

Isaiah 9:8-12

THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD!

In Heavenly Armor we'll enter the land; the Battle belongs to the Lord!
No weapon that's fashioned against us will stand; the Battle belongs to the Lord!
And we sing, "Glory, Honor, Power, and Strength to the Lord!"
We sing, "Glory, Honor, Power, and Strength to the Lord!"

Isaiah 9:8-12

"The **LORD** has pronounced judgment on the kingdom of Israel, on the descendants of Jacob. All the People of Israel...will know that He has done this! Now they are proud and arrogant. They say, 'The brick buildings have fallen down, but we will replace them with stone buildings. The beams of sycamore wood have been cut down, but we will replace them with the finest cedar.' The **LORD** stirred up their enemies to attack them. Syria on the east and Philistia on the west have opened their mouths to devour Israel. Yet even so, the **LORD's** anger is not ended; His hand is still stretched out to punish!"

QUESTIONS FOR TODAY

- Have you ever faced "tragedy" or "loss" with a renewed determination to "rebuild and move on" to an even better possibility? How did that work out for you? For others around you?
- In what sense can we consider every event in life a "pronouncement of judgment" from the Lord? Is each "decision" of ours a "response" to Divine Grace, positive or otherwise?
- Do we experience God's Love as "wrath" if we reject or resist it? How do we as the "chosen ones" set aside "pride" and "arrogance" so as to "end" God's "anger" and "punishment"?

God is Love...gracious, unmerited, unconditional. But there is a "catch" of sorts. Unless we love in return with the same total commitment, the Divine Love that enfolds us is a judgment on our selfish search for "power", "prestige", and/or "pleasure". In Isaiah's day, God's "Chosen People" had lost their way, fracturing the Nation He had liberated from slavery in Egypt, and chasing after other sources of "strength", "wisdom", "beauty", and "goodness". They had built new "shrines" to other "deities", and sought alliance and protection with "pagan" nations. But to the God who had given land and liberty to their ancestors, they gave little more than "lip service". Isaiah set out to sound a badly needed "wake-up" call. (It worked, at least for a little while, because the Lord delivered the Kingdom of Judah from its enemies in Isaiah's time. Syria and Israel fell to the Assyrians, who in their turn, fell to the Babylonians. It would be the Babylonians who would crush a rebellious Judah, raze the city of Jerusalem, and exile its leadership.) It seems "God's People" need such "wake-ups" regularly, for Isaiah's warnings ring true through the ages. Even in our own day, it is easy to compromise our own spiritual well-being and moral standing by "caving in" to a predominantly secular culture. The need for constant vigilance and ongoing renewal is just as critical today as it was in the age of Isaiah and his sons. "Rebuilding and moving on" only works if God is at the center of the process. God, grant us the Grace of Humble Trust! Help us submit ourselves to Your Will. Teach us to seek You wisely to avoid "judgment" and receive mercy in the times our "foes" surround us. Let Your Love be the real Foundation of our efforts to restore lost unity in vision and purpose. May we depend on Your Truth as we "rebuild the Temple of Liberty" in the image of Your Justice! Put Your Peace in our souls, so we turn to You in "times of testing" that would weaken our resolve and dilute our faith. Keep us strong in Your Joy, and wise in Your Word, so we remain aligned with Your Divine Design!